

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

SUB A37

1. An image storage comprising:
  - a memory that stores a plurality of digital image data provided by a plurality of image providers; *HDD*
  - a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; *server records popularity*
  - and
  - a controller that controls a condition for each image provider in storing the digital image in accordance with the recorder. *server controls access on HDD*
2. The image storage according to claim 1, wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory.
3. The image storage according to claim 1, wherein the recorder is designed to record the number of orders from the image users for each of the digital image data.
4. The image storage according to claim 3, wherein the controller is designed to control the condition for each image provider in accordance with the number of orders in a predetermined period for the digital image data stored by the image provider.
5. The image storage according to claim 4, wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the creator is entitled to store in the memory.
6. The image storage according to claim 5, wherein the controller is designed to increase the number of the digital image data for the image provider if the number of the order for the digital image data

copy to HDD

09816227 032601

of the image provider increases.

7. The image storage according to claim 5, wherein the controller is designed to decrease the number of the digital image data for the image provider if the number of the order for the digital image data of the image provider decreases. *erase from*

8. The image storage according to claim 1, further comprising a searcher that searches the memory for digital image data fulfilling a given condition set on the history recorded by the recorder. *user*

9. The image storage according to claim 8, wherein the given condition is set on the number of orders from the image users for each of the digital image data recorded by the recorder.

10. The image storage according to claim 9, wherein the given condition is that the number of orders for the digital image data is greater than a given number, whereby a popular digital image data fulfils the condition.

11. The image storage according to claim 9, wherein the given condition is that the number of orders for the digital image data is less than a given number, whereby an unappreciated digital image data fulfils the condition.

12. The image storage according to claim 8, wherein the given condition is set on the image provider with the condition in storing the digital image.

13. The image storage according to claim 12, wherein the given condition is that the number of the

09016227 032601

digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory is greater than a given number, whereby a digital image data provided by a popular image provider fulfils the condition.

5

14. The image storage according to claim 12, wherein the given condition is that the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory is less than a given number, whereby a digital image data provided by a fresh image provider fulfils the condition.

10

15. The image storage according to claim 14, further comprising printed matter production system that makes use of the digital image data in the memory for a production of printed matter.

15

16. The image storage according to claim 15, wherein the printed matter production system includes an acceptor that accepts from an image user a designation of a set of digital image data for an order of printed matter.

20

17. The image storage according to claim 16, wherein the printed matter production system further includes a selector that selects a type of printer suitable for individual production of the printed matter.

25

18. The image storage according to claim 15, wherein the printed matter production system includes a proposer that proposes a plurality of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of potential image users for calendar, an acceptor that accepts the selections by the potential image users, and a decider that decides to realize a mass production of printed matter in accordance with the accepted

30

35

09816227.032601

selections.

19. The image storage according to claim 18,  
wherein the printed matter production system further  
5 includes a selector that selects a type of printer  
suitable for mass production of the printed matter .

20. The image storage according to claim 1  
further comprising a selector that selects one of a  
10 plurality of types of printers for producing a print  
of a digital image data in accordance with an order  
from an image user.

21. The image storage according to claim 20,  
15 wherein the selector is designed to select the printer  
between a first type of printer suitable for  
individual production of the print of a digital image  
data and a second type of printer suitable for mass  
production of the print of the digital image data in  
20 accordance with the number of orders for producing  
prints of the digital image data from the image users.

22. A method of facilitating the circulation of  
digital image data stored in a memory comprising the  
25 steps of:

storing digital image data of a plurality of  
image providers in the memory;

informing a plurality of image users of the  
digital image data;

30 accepting orders from an image user for a digital  
image data;

recording the history of the order for each  
digital image data; and

controlling a condition for each image provider  
35 in storing the digital image in accordance with the  
history of the order for the digital image data of the  
image provider.

09816227-032601

23. The method according to claim 22, wherein the condition for each image provider is the number of the digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in accordance with the number of orders accepted in a predetermined period for the digital image data of the image provider.

24. An image storage comprising:  
a memory that stores a plurality of digital image data provided by a plurality of image providers;  
a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; and  
a searcher that searches the memory for a digital image data fulfilling a given condition set on the history recorded by the recorder.

25. The image storage according to claim 24, wherein the given condition is set on the number of orders from the image users for each of the digital image data recorded by the recorder.

26. The image storage according to claim 25, wherein the given condition is set on a relationship between the number of orders for the digital image data and a given number, whereby a digital image data is searched for depending on the popularity of the digital image data.

27. The image storage according to claim 24, wherein the given condition is set on the image provider with the condition in storing the digital image.

28. The image storage according to claim 27, wherein the given condition is set on a relationship

between the number of digital image data that the image provider is entitled to store in the memory and a given number, whereby a digital image data is searched for depending on the popularity of the image provider who stores the image.

29. An image storage comprising:

a memory that stores a plurality of digital image data provided by a plurality of image providers;

10 a recorder that records the history of use by a plurality of image users with respect to each of the digital image data; and

a selector that selects one of a plurality of types of printers for producing a print of a digital image data in accordance with an order from an image user.

30. The image storage according to claim 29, wherein the selector is designed to select the printer between a first type of printer suitable for individual production of the print of a digital image data and a second type of printer suitable for mass production of the print of the digital image data in accordance with the number of orders for producing prints of the digital image data from the image users.

31. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:

30 storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;

proposing a plurality of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of potential image users for printed matter ;

35 accepting the selections by the potential image users; and

deciding on a mass production of printed matter

09816227-032604

in accordance with the accepted selections.

32. The method according to claim 31, further comprising a step of informing the potential image users of preparatory proposals of the digital image data and a step of hearing responses thereto from the potential image users, the proposing step being conducted in accordance with the responses.

33. The method according to claim 31, wherein a plurality of groups of digital image data are proposed in the proposing step, and wherein selections of one digital image data from every group are accepted in the accepting step.

34. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;

proposing a plurality of groups of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of image users for printed matter ;

accepting the selections of one digital image data from every group by each image user; and

producing printed matter for each image user in accordance with the selections, respectively.

35. A method of producing printed matter from a plurality of digital image data stored in a memory comprising the steps of:

storing a plurality of digital image data in the memory;

proposing a plurality of groups of optional digital image data for selection by a plurality of image users for printed matter ;

accepting the selections of one digital image

09816227 032601

data from every group by each image user;

informing each image user of the total result of the selections by the image users; and

allowing each image user to change the selection  
5 in view of the informed total result.

36. A printed matter producing system comprising:

10 a container including a plurality of groups of sub-containers each keeping a plurality of sheets of print produced on one image source, respectively;

a selector that selects one sheet from a sub-container of every group, respectively, the option of the sub-container among every group being depending  
15 on an order by an image user for printed matter; and

a binder that binds the selected sheets into printed matter.

37. A method of producing a product from a plurality of elements comprising the steps of:

proposing a plurality of optional elements for selection by a plurality of potential users;

accepting the selections by the potential users; and

25 deciding on a mass production of the product in accordance with the accepted selections.

38. The method according to claim 37, wherein a plurality of groups of elements are proposed in the proposing step, and wherein selections of one element  
30 from every group are accepted in the accepting step.

39. A method of producing a product from a plurality of elements comprising the steps of:

35 proposing a plurality of groups of optional elements for selection by a plurality of users;

accepting the selections of one element from

09816227-032601



every group by each user; and  
 producing a product for each user in accordance  
 with the selections, respectively.

5           40. A method of producing a product from a  
 plurality of elements comprising the steps of:  
           proposing a plurality of groups of optional  
 elements for selection by a plurality of users;  
           accepting the selections of one element from  
 10 every group by each user;  
           informing each user of the total result of the  
 selections by the users; and  
           allowing each user to change the selection in  
 view of the informed total result.

15           41. A data storage comprising:  
           a memory that stores a plurality of digital data  
 provided by a plurality of providers;  
           a recorder that records the history of use by a  
 20 plurality of users with respect to each of the digital  
 data; and  
           a controller that controls a condition for each  
 provider in storing the digital data in accordance  
 with the recorder.

25

09816227-032601